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# THE CHILD MIND

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# THE CHILD MIND

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# CHILD MIND

*A STUDY IN ELEMENTARY ETHOLOGY*

BY
HENRIETTA HOME

ELKIN MATHEWS
VIGO STREET LONDON
MCMVI

Educ 2087.06

Duplicate money

My fairest child! I have no song to give you.
No lark could pipe to skies so dull and grey;
Yet ere we part, one lesson I will leave you
For every day.

Be good, sweet maid; and let who will be clever.
Do noble deeds, not dream them all day long.
And so make Life, Death, and that vast forever,
One grand, sweet song.

CHARLES KINGSLEY.

# INTRODUCTION

In setting out to write a book of ethics in relation to the upbringing of children, anyone may conscientiously and fearlessly confess to a sense of overpowering guilt, for the act in itself is, in a small measure, one of accusation and condemnation towards the rest of the world, which is occupied, to a large extent, in marrying, giving in marriage, and assuming parental responsibility. But to carry through a labour of this kind, consequences, critics, and censures must all be eliminated for the nonce from a prospect of the future, the author eschewing tirade and, at the same time, writing, if possible, under the hallucination that no infuriated mothers exist, nor that such an anomaly as an argumentative and aggravated maiden-aunt could put a spoke in the wheel which revolves on the axis of conscientiousness.

The book, let it be said at once, is primarily intended for all who love children: those misguided individuals whose affection is only too often composed partly of selfishness and partly of ignorance, whose appreciation of children's company and conversation prevents their recognition of the fact that the company and conversation were not necessarily sent into the world for the benefit of the parent or guardian, and who invariably "miss the children so

much " during an absence that a reunion has to be effected regardless of the child's wishes.

Then, the book is intended for those who confess to total ignorance of the juvenile mind, who say they are " afraid of children, because in these days they are so grown-up, you know," and who think that a child only cares for people who play, excluding from its affections those who merely speak. And the object of such miniature philosophy is this : that in consideration of the fact that there must be in England so many others better fitted than the present author to propound views which in themselves are valuable, it is hoped that some one, whose mental and sentimental equipment is of the strongest, will enlarge upon the subject, draw attention to the starvation which is now possessing the souls of so many boys and girls, and, by this means, feed natures which, if warped and dwarfed, will turn into future atheists, pessimists, and dyspeptics of bitter tongue and sarcastic speech.

" Degeneracy " and " Efficiency " are the two sociologic war-cries of the present day, and Mr. H. G. Wells in his *Mankind in the Making* (that admirable book which should be read and re-read by every sensible citizen and country man and woman) was among the pioneers in suggesting that *in the homes* lay the solution of so many social problems. He should have gone even further; he should have written a chapter on the importance of behaviour to a child by its mother anterior to

birth, on the responsibilities of the parents who thoughtlessly carve out a rut in the road of destiny for yet one more human being, and who lamentably fail, oh! how often, not only to do their duty towards the child, but to recognize the fact that there is any duty to be performed other than that prescribed by law dealing with maintenance, housing, and education. People may say that the whole matter is one of lack of conscience; they may aver that affection is a ruling power, and if absent cannot be substituted; they may go yet further, and blame civilization for the acknowledged decline of virtue in the maternal instinct; still, they will be all wrong. Children often remain very badly off in other directions than that along which the necessaries of life travel.

At this point it may be said that in the present volume there will have to remain much to be taken for granted. The subject being so enormous, with innumerable octopeian branches, it were impossible to begin from the correct beginning. Grappling with an adequate introduction in such a case would mean the passing of a lifetime before the pith of the subject could be reached, and therefore it is necessary to point out that this work is not intended for the edification of people in circumstances of dire poverty or want. It is written for those who, whatever their position in life, are able to bring up their children in comparative comfort, and who are neither unfortunate invalids nor the victims of any untoward stroke

from the wand of Fate incapacitating them to a greater extent than their fellows.

"What," may be asked, "is the reason of this strange misunderstanding and mismanagement of children at the hands of their parents, guardians, or governors?" (Tutors and teachers, it may be observed, are omitted from the list of evil-doers, because, at the time when their authority comes into force, the mischief has invariably been done in the home circle.) The solution of the problem is no easy matter, for infelicitous circumstances are not modern growths; their roots penetrate far back into history, to still remoter times, where our eyesight is powerless to trace any line of conduct when children, in those early centuries, must have been regarded as more or less rational mortals; for on the whole, the better-class children seemed to be more popular than at present, and to-day we are experiencing the direct outcome of the bringing-up vouchsafed to our grandmothers, great-uncles, and great-aunts. They never saw their parents except for a specified half-hour or so every day (during which pocket edition of purgatory they had to endure best clothes, uncomfortable attitudes, and either enforced silence or else unnatural conversation.) The female portion of the family was never permitted to know anything, see anything, hear anything derogatory to the dignity of "a little lady," with the result that English ladies became narrow-minded prigs, fenced in with barbed-wire conventionalities,

and forgot, in short, how to be human. The most natural act of having babies they managed to turn into an inhuman action; they stifled the mother-love and drew a line, as it were, between the babe and themselves which the former must never cross under fear of perpetrating an act designated as disrespectful. In teaching pinchbeck respect they schooled their children into the profoundest disrespect for all human kind, they destroyed generous instincts, and sowed incalculable harm which it has been the misfortune of the present age to reap.

The "new woman" craze had nothing whatever to do with the neglect of the children's character-forming—on the contrary, it has been the saving of the maternal instinct. It was the turning-point in the career of mother and child; it was the resurrection of parental love. Women's freedom taught them that public liberty was composed of fetters, and that petticoat government was a bore. They learned that it was more satisfactory to "boss their own department," which the men "bungled," than to compete against and fight a crowd. They left the public work to women with leisure and without babies, suddenly recognizing the fact that the nation was deteriorating because the one hand that *could* mix feeding-bottles was gesticulating on a platform.

Yes. The women suddenly discovered that they could pull wires if they reared strong men to pull those wires in their name; they

saw their power, their charm, their attraction deserting them; they became restless and hard-hearted, and the revulsion of feeling occurred when, one by one, they discovered that there was nothing worth having in this world but love, and that it awaited them in its primary (but nevertheless its grandest) form at home; that the greatest happiness lay in the clasping of two little arms round the mother's neck, and the thrusting of a confidential head into a nestling, snug position on her breast.

But what transpired after this momentous discovery? "Things are not always what they seem," and this return of the babies "back to the land" was not the perfection of accomplishment. On the babies' part everything was entirely satisfactory; on the mothers' part the reverse was the case—*they had forgotten how to be mothers*—the instinct had been weeded out of their ancestors, and heredity was powerless to become a quick-change artist. It refused to be other than conventional; it seemed to say, "If you try hard to be as motherly as you can for three or four generations, I will arrange for the re-introduction of the maternal instinct;" and so you hear women say that they do not mind their own children, but that they do not care for other people's, and they give parties to please children in ignorance of the fact that such entertainments are insidious institutions, and they overfeed children, mismanage them, give them too much or too little liberty, money, and what not, simply from a mistaken sense of

duty, an agonized wish to do their best in spite of a very palpable ignorance leading to disastrous consequences when it is too late to think of rectification.

It is not our place here, however, to search for reasons; our best plan is to take things as they are at the moment, and work at them. The perpetual "Why?" will doubtless haunt us to the end of time. When Adam and Eve ate of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil they took too small a bite, and we have been ignorant ever since. It is part of the great curse that we know nothing, and our time here is so limited, our days so terribly short, that before we realize our descent we have fallen into the grave and left so much work undone behind us. Our children do not realize their position, for they inherit their short-sightedness from us; and we cannot blame them—we can but teach patiently. And of that teaching only some of the crudest letters of the alphabet can be given here, in the hope that the recitation and spelling of them may accrue in the greatest possible good to representatives of "the least of these little ones."

# CHAPTER I

SAGES will disagree on the subject of ethology as long as philosophers exist. Some affirm that character is a consequence of circumstance; others that it is formed irrespective of and in spite of limits and limitations arranged by humankind. For our purpose here, we can admit of only one theory which will, at any rate, serve as an excellent working hypothesis, viz.: that character and the facility for breathing fresh air are given simultaneously to a child at the moment of its birth; and inasmuch as an insufficient supply of air or lung food may considerably impair that facility, so a contaminated moral atmosphere will injure the growth of the character and develop signs of disease resulting in future putrefaction and decay. By the time, therefore, that a baby is born, the mischief has practically been done; the mother in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred remaining ignorant of the fact that, instead of heredity (that most serviceable scapegoat) being responsible for many undesirable traits early evinced by the progeny, it is frequently owing to her own thoughts and behaviour that the baby's character is what it is; and once the baby is a separate organism in the world, she can only set herself to repair the mischief she has undeniably caused.

With ante-natal difficulties it would be obviously unwise to deal here; it is therefore to the post-natal duties, opportunities, and science we shall give our entire attention.

A child, then, comes into the world with a species of character; it will differ from every other baby in the way it takes its bottle or refuses to take it, in the way it clutches with its hands, in the way it voices its complaints against the world in general, in the way it eventually "begins to take notice." Though all babies will at first remark on and coo at the glories of the light, the magnificence of the waving branch of a tree, the fascination of coloured flowers in a hat, or the entrancing jingle and glisten of the silvern rattle, with other weaknesses of the flesh, every single baby will differ from others in its methods of admiration and rapture. We all take, in a different spirit, those pleasures which we share with a crowd, and it cannot be argued with any reason that our personality travels on a line of its own at any particular point later than the moment of birth. Some of us evince signs of violent temper, even quarrelling so early in life with our bread and butter that we have been known to break feeding bottles by throwing them on to the floor, and then appreciating the sound of broken glass with nothing short of gusto.

And anyone asking whether it is possible to train up the infantile mind to recognition that the sound is expressive of great immorality, may be shocked on hearing the affirmation that

if such training were possible, it would also be most pernicious; and the individual who would endeavour to teach a morality in which the throwing of a soft ball is right and the throwing of a glass bottle is wrong, would be unworthy of the name of philosopher. For it is either right to throw things or not right; the morality of the action must be decided one way or the other, and as no one could sensibly suggest that the act is in any degree wrong, the simple solution of the problem lies in proper supervision being arranged in order that the child may never have the opportunity of hearing the smash of glass until it has reached an age to which such a sound would give no pleasure.

Herein lies one of the new golden rules for the making of a child's happiness, together with the prevention of uprooting all its logical ideas (for children are naturally logical) that it is advisable to exercise supervision, in withholding the means to perform undesirable acts until the age is reached when the act has no attraction. The act of throwing supplies muscular satisfaction, and the slight reverberation produces mental gratification; altogether the performance can be carried out on strictly moral lines with suitable implements, and the child will the sooner outgrow tendencies, the inconveniences of which are apt to pervert our sense of justice. Further, as the child becomes older and perhaps has the audacity and misfortune to throw the mother's best hat into the

big bath, it will be old enough to realize that morality as applied to hats holds equally good, only that the outcome of the rule that "throwing is good" is the fact that "throwing is only good when indulged in to the satisfaction of the surrounding company or to the world at large." Throwing a hat into a bath is not in itself a more immoral action than that of throwing a stone into a pond. But throwing a hat into water becomes an immoral act if the hat is not our own. The goods are being damaged; inconvenience (to say the least of it) is being caused to the rightful owner, and the perpetration of such a deed is therefore of a selfish, unkind, and thoughtless nature. In a similar case, therefore, the child should not be lectured or smacked for "being naughty." It should be lectured for being *selfish*, and given a faithful promise that should such an exhibition of selfishness and thoughtlessness ever occur again, grave punishment will ensue. The culprit will not forget such a scene; it (or perhaps the designation should be he or she) will respect the owner of that hat for ever; he or she will be inwardly genuinely contrite, and he or she will never require the promised Nemesis. Such an occurrence does more good to a child's conscience than all the scolding in the whole world. It teaches it self-respect and a decent attitude to all the owners of hats that were ever born. It never forgets afterwards that it has a kind of responsibility in its little sphere; that it has the power to cause incon-

venience by mere stupid thoughtlessness; and there are very few children who would not take the lesson thoroughly and healthily to heart.

This is, of course, only given as a test case, as it would be beyond the power of the human hand to write a list of inconveniences caused by unsuspecting children, with special remedies suggested for the comfort of aggravated parents. The idea which it is necessary to convey is that of strictest justice, an essential factor in the mental happiness of every average child, and one which is pleasanter to think on than any other antagonistic scheme. Methods which debar barbarity and roughness, giving place to equanimity, explanation, and thorough firmness, are bound to succeed. Parents will see the character of their children positively growing under a benign influence; they will see unimpaired reason, a good conscience, strength of purpose and strength of will being established and developed slowly but surely every day; for it is possible to bring into the most elementary nursery life the highest ethical principles—principles which enable children in after-life to see the right course in front of them and to follow that course steadfastly—principles which teach them to be just, honourable and tolerant, respecting themselves and their neighbours, and having command over men and things, but, above all, a perfect command over their own selves.

## CHAPTER II

DOCTOR JOHNSON described naughtiness as being "slight wickedness or perverseness as of children," and the question of how to deal with such lapse of virtue on the part of the diminutive and recalcitrant personage has been answered in so many ways, all equally unsatisfactory and unworkable, that it were at least profitable to inquire into the matter to a certain limited extent in this chapter. If, in dealing with naughtiness, we adopt the definition of the great lexicographer, we are dealing with a quality of the mind known as perversity, and perversity in its turn signifies "petulance and spiteful crossness" and other consanguineous disagreeables. Therefore, the mood which induces the expression of itself to take such an inconvenient form is none other than one of extraordinary contrariety; in consequence of which it may safely be assumed that the "naughty" child is acting in a manner wilfully disconsonant to the parent's wishes.

Hence it may be deduced from this examination that if naughtiness can be prevented, the child's moral nature receives great stimulus; and by this it is not meant that a child should necessarily be a prig in never performing any act of originality without at first acquiring

permission: that, on the contrary, would infer loss of independence, and a stifling of that sporting instinct which should find a place in the heart of every child. By preventing naughtiness, an undesirable *state of mind* is hindered from gaining even the slightest ascendency over those thoughts which are more to be desired, and the actions of the child are left untrammelled by any doubts, fears, or perplexities. Where perverseness has no place, there is more scope for useful thought: where petulance is non-existent, unselfishness gains a foothold: and we venture to proclaim here (in contradiction to any who choose to adopt the opposite view) that it is easy to stamp out evil if we go the right way about it, and more difficult to become vicious than virtuous. Tell a child how much easier it is to be good than not good, to be unselfish than selfish, to be patient than impatient, and it will invariably adopt the easy way of living. Perversity, the act of opposing the superior will, is infinitely troublesome, puzzling, fatiguing; and with a child whose inclination is to be perverse, it is merely a matter of conveying to its mind the hopeful assurance that obedience is the one thing with which it need be concerned at present, and that child's mind will become gradually peaceful, to the exclusion of any wish to take its own line in an unfortunate way.

Children are always *naturally good.* What is more, they are never naughty except through the fault of those who, having undertaken

their up-bringing, contaminate the pure little minds by erroneous, vulgar, and selfish ideas. These, falling on virgin soil, have more space to grow in the innocence than in a contracted area of evil. The child-mind is singularly receptive: it is governed by the slightest breeze of thought emanating from a mind larger than itself, and in a small degree it is dependent for its own moulding on the help it instinctively expects to receive from those in its vicinity. How often do we not hear parents shamelessly declare that "telling is no good now, so I have recourse to smacking or putting in the corner"? Such conduct is looked upon as being of so natural a consequence on the advancing age of the child, that parents vie with one another in comparing notes on the subject with great interest. They publicly affirm that their word is ignored, their influence *nil*, and their own ignorance colossal: the shame of it never occurs to them. The child's contempt for their authority is either classed as being extremely clever, or its exercise is attributed to strength of will; and meanwhile the child is laying up for itself stores of unhappiness collected by the agents' ignorance and thoughtlessness.

The most self-willed child (and they all ought to be as headstrong as possible) should be helped and guided. The stronger the character of the infant, the more trusting it will be: whether weak or strong, the result of good influence is equally happy and delight-

ful; the strong can become gentle withal, and the weak more self-reliant.

A great dramatist has said that "the golden rule is that there is no golden rule," but he had overlooked children when his epigrammatic spirit ran away with him; for there is a golden rule to be applied in miniature ethology, so golden, in fact, that few have felt themselves rich enough to make use of it; and the rule is to the effect that "Nothing should ever be done which is either vulgar or unkind."

These two "sins" cover everything. They convey just sufficient to the child-mind without alarming it or making it brood over sin and punishment and hell and extermination or perpetual torture: they give it a healthy idea of one's duty towards one's neighbour, they teach it cleanliness of mind, of habit, of body: they teach it unselfishness, thoughtfulness for others, honesty of purpose and proper pride; the principle elevates and does not degrade: it is helpful, cheerful, and easy of comprehension. And the best of the golden rule is, that in the application the parent can always convey to the child the idea that the highest conduct is expected. Being as watchful and as careful as possible, it is yet perfectly easy to demand silently that in the most commonplace and ordinary pursuits the greatest integrity should prevail. A child cannot do otherwise than rise to the level which it is expected to occupy; it cannot realize any other line of behaviour: it remains in ignorance of low methods, and only discovers their

existence when it is fortunately too late to adopt a mean standard. The foundations of broadness of mind with noble aspirations can never be shaken if built on solid rock, and feeling itself above dishonesty, untruthfulness, and meanness of any kind, a child can never sink back into an element which would be an altogether strange and incomprehensible atmosphere.

To arrive then at a satisfactory command over a child's impetuosity, perversity, and natural independence of spirit, it is necessary to maintain diligently a thoroughly consistent discipline; and to succeed in this it stands to reason that the "governing body" must be in possession of a certain reserve of power, not only on account of the necessary morality, but because every child happily shows an instinctive and intuitive faculty for distinguishing between probity and humbug, a faculty which assumes forms commonly known as Respect, or its direct opposite, Contempt. To gain such useful reserve of power has seldom remained an unachieved ambition, for the mere entertaining of such a desire implies more or less success in the wielding of the longed-for power; moreover, it is of all ambitions the easiest to fulfil, and certainly one of the most satisfactory. It is often noted how one person's word is either treated lightly or totally unheeded by the little pitchers with long ears, while one syllable from someone else (probably not the least formidable in appearance or voice) will command immediate attention from the

Liliputian mob. The derided and unsuccessful elder meekly remarks to the other that "you manage them so wonderfully," while the other may reply with only the sympathetic smile of wisdom, commonly known as the essence of self-satisfaction. An old nurse once said: "Children 'ear, but they don't 'eed!" and a more classical and at the same time more practical way of expressing a sentiment akin to it is by means of the old adage that "little birds that won't sing must be made to sing." The only safe method of ensuring a performance lies in the certainty of their knowledge that should they refuse to pipe, the inability (?) to comply with the request will be met by a determination on the part of their master to hear the song at all hazards, an understanding which invariably culminates in as successful a concert as any conductor could desire.

One great difficulty frequently cropping up to do serious damage in moral educations is the effect of a bad example. A child is quick to note the difference between its own behaviour and that of the little friends who come to tea. It says to its little self: "He or she says 'I won't' and 'I shan't,' and invariably gets the best of it. So I shall adopt that simple plan and begin that game too." In a way, such observation and thoughtfulness are to be commended. The child has an open mind and that commendable sporting instinct. It wants to dabble in experience, and it should be encouraged to dabble. But—and this is a "but" of gigantic propor-

tions—the child should know at once that its moral instructor thoroughly *understands* the idea. If met with the wet blanket of assurance that the thought which prompted such words is understood, and that imitation and not originality is the basis of the expression, the child will evince beneficial and certain disappointment. "I won't and I shan't" will in future be the property of misguided and pitiable persons "who have no one to help them"; and from this elementary idea will spring that limitless notion of sympathy and humane feeling which ever refuses to turn its back on "wickedness" in others. The certainty that wrongdoers are to be pitied and helped and dragged up somehow is half the rescue work already performed. The very knowledge that it is only the ignorant who "sin," helps a child to stamp on every temptation in a more or less firm manner, and stamping out temptation is merely rising above it. A child's spirits grow lighter as its sympathies expand and its understanding increases. The cry of "universal injustice" will not emanate from its soul in that bitter key too often heard around us; the true philosophy will beget a belief in action and silence, a conviction that however little achieved, it is at all events something; and that the "Power of Evil" is only a bugbear to the uninitiated. "Darkened by shadows of earth, but reflecting an image of Heaven," the child may yet learn to be a worthy father of the man.

## CHAPTER III

AFTER dealing with the question of "naughtiness," an examination should be held of the means which the average human parent adopts as a corrective or preventitive, the most prominent line of conduct and that most requiring consideration being undoubtedly castigation or whipping. Ever since the promulgation of Solomon's heinous axiom, "Spare the rod and spoil the child," parents have excused their behaviour when beating offending offspring by this adage, deceiving themselves into the belief that whether such physical aids to moral influence were right, at any rate they were convenient. For children may be reduced to immediate order by threats of the rod; children may be rendered obedient; children may be rendered quiet, tractable, and wonderfully submissive—aye, children may be made to believe (for the nonce) that they are not such fine specimens of humanity as the mighty wielders of the stick, whose power is nothing short of animalism pure and simple. Yet we should have outgrown brute-force by now, for it is utterly barbarous and best omitted from discussion. And when it is urged, "Would you press such a theory when all the authorities are upholding flogging in the navy? Would you prohibit the cane at the public school? and

would not a resurrection of the cat-o'-nine-tails in the condemnatory category of the county-court judge be of value and prove an excellent deterrent from crime, if both young and old came within its potency?"—when such questions are urged, an answer in the affirmative may be safely given, together with a logical explanation of what at first sight might appear to be an inconsistent doctrine. Inasmuch as this book is meant to establish a certain ethical standard applicable to *babes*, castigation is termed an evil only when the argument is used in connection with infants; for when the child has outgrown what may be called "the age of character-making," and, for the purpose of argument, has turned out to be a failure morally, the rule that castigation is a mistake may possibly be entirely wrong, and if moral neglect on the part of parents result, as is invariably the case, in future difficulties for the child, it can only be hoped, in compensation for the necessary violence, the sins of the children may some day be visited upon the fathers (and mothers), and that a just God will avenge those incalculable wrongs put upon innocent shoulders.

Whipping may be necessary, therefore, when a boy proves himself to be an incorrigible liar, a disobedient knave, or an impertinent dog, but in the "small hours" of childhood, when everything is tender, pliable, and "weakly strong," when the character is blossoming and the will-power developing, it is a positive sin to

lay hands upon a child. And, moreover, he or she naturally disliking rough-handling, it is an egregious mistake ever to push or pull him or her, except under exceptional circumstances after fair and honourable warning. If a child after being told either to come or go utterly refuses to obey the order, much patient firmness must be used and every diplomatic move tried before resorting to physical force. A child should be shown the parent's dislike of such physical force; it should be informed that as the order will have to be obeyed eventually, it were causing less trouble, saving time, and employing common sense to "knuckle under" at once, and if every inducement fail, a strong pair of arms must carry the unwilling and recalcitrant sinner from the spot, with a calm deliberation and strength of purpose impressive in the extreme. "No threats," says Herbert Spencer, "but a silent, rigorous performance," and "I am quite sure," says Edward FitzGerald, "as a general rule it is better to lean to the extreme of indulgence than of severity—you at least get at *truth*, if ugly truth, by letting a child display his character without fear, and faults that determine outwardly are far more likely to evaporate than when repressed to rankle within. Anyhow, the ugliest truth is better than the handsomest falsehood."

The cultivation of fear in the child's heart is a wrong the potency of which cannot be sufficiently realized. Fear of corporal punish-

ment or being "shamed" will suggest to the child mind the art and practice of lying—it will strangle generous impulses and courageous behaviour, giving place to the spirit of calculation, diplomacy, and unnatural tact: fear of being misunderstood produces a morbid and unhealthy state, a state of envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness, which will be certainly foreign to the child nature; and, therefore, during earliest years of infancy, mental and physical punishment should be rigorously excluded from the scheme of education.

Snubbing, that most popular form of torture among parents who pride themselves upon their own cleverness and wit, is a dangerous and harmful mode of administering correction. Children lose confidence when their elders, taking advantage of childish ignorance, tease them for the amusement of onlookers, and it is only good for all youthful boys and girls to be well "ragged" by their equals and contemporaries; they have power, in such a case, to retaliate, and in retaliation exert their own abilities, learning to "look alive" and take their chance among many. But, if children are supposed to exhibit good manners, they learn not to "answer back" when reprimanded, and as strict justice is to prevail in all dealing, it is therefore of the highest importance that no unfair advantage should be taken of a child's enforced silence. Teasing, bullying, snubbing, all come from the same idea and should be unheard of in the relationship of parent towards

child. "The ill-behaviour of many children," remarks Herbert Spencer again, "is in itself a consequence of that chronic irritation in which they are kept by bad management. . . . Be content, therefore, with moderate measures and moderate results. Bear in mind that a higher morality, like a higher intelligence, must be reached by slow growth, and you will then have patience with those imperfections which your child hourly displays." The infantile feelings should, by the same token, remain perfectly undisturbed; and though, as was explained in a previous chapter, it is advisable to cultivate the sympathies which spring up naturally in the heart of every child, it is inadvisable ever to harrow the feelings of the youthful. By remaining undisturbed, the emotional nature grows without its little owner being aware too keenly of its presence. Broken dolls, disappointments when the rain intervenes to spoil the anticipated pleasure of a day's outing, failure of Father Christmas to place the correct kind of armour or uniform in the suspended stocking—such contretemps are quite sufficient (and extremely valuable) to develop the emotional nature. It must never be played upon in an unnatural key; for instance, it is well to acquaint all children with the fact that other children are poor and destitute, very often, of food and toys (the two items which will easiest appeal to their understanding); they may embody their pity in a well-made scrap-book or a neatly-dressed doll

of their own design, or a basket of food of their own cooking, and hand the gift to their *protégé* themselves, but parents should never share either their own worries or griefs with a child; its sympathy should never be brought into requisition except in connection with troubles of its own brothers, sisters, or contemporaries; it should remain totally unacquainted with the trials of elders until it has grown up and met its own misfortunes in the wind that will then be found tempered to the shorn lamb.

The wisdom of this plan can be easily understood when it is remembered that in everything, whether it be art or nature, perfection is only arrived at by slow stages of progression. Children's sympathies are no exception to the rule; as the years are few, so are the sympathies undeveloped, and as the years multiply, and the understanding expands, so do the sympathies grow accordingly. They must not be forced, nor played upon too often; they must be treated gently, and with consideration born of common sense, even as the child's body shall be so treated. After all, example is better than precept, and a wise parent having wide sympathies may lead a child's heart into the right place, showing mercy and kindness towards others less fortunate in the world, and maintaining in the troubles of self, a noble and unbending front. Courage and cheerfulness, good temper and patience in trifles can be learned in the smallest or the largest house, under every condition by

every human being. Without any *arrière pensée* in connection with rod, or snub, or inattention, a child should be encouraged to speak out its little mind to parents, whose noblest work consists in the proper understanding of those little forms to whom they have given birth so heedlessly, and without fear to choke the path, Truth may find a fit and suitable dwelling-place, and where Truth is, there abideth Peace also.

As to rewards (in opposition to punishments), they are mostly insidious things, and should be unknown to the child before school days, when prizes serve as proof of industry, capacity and talent, for the pacification of hopeful parents at home. In the infantile mind, a reward should never be contemplated unless it be in the form of honest approval bestowed by an elder for whose judgment the youthful mind has respect and admiration. Children should act in certain moral ways because it is "right" to do so, and "right" should be divided into all those partitions representing truth, honour, unselfishness, forbearance, kindness and cleanliness, which, taking up the entire attention, leave no room for their opposites. To be commended because of the rectitude of a certain act should be sufficient reward for the infant who, being brought up on such principles, will eventually prefer the approval of its own conscience to any popular applause. Vanity is thereby killed at one blow, and the proper proportion of

"merit" immediately recognized in the juvenile brain.

With regard to that pernicious habit of feeding children to "keep them quiet," or give them a treat, no condemnation can be sufficiently severe. Common sense will at once point out that such a procedure can only result in one of two consequences. It either tends to make the child greedy (looking upon food as being specially worthy of acquisition), or else gives it to understand that its parent regards food in an affectionate light, this latter calamity ending, of course, in a lamentable climax when the child, arriving at years of discretion, sees for itself the utter degradation of such a policy. Punishments and rewards, then, are *both* to be avoided: they are artificial means to an end, they are the very worst specimens of things temporal, and represent nothing of any value whatsoever; they spoil generous instincts, they encourage slyness, unnatural striving, greed, or fear; they produce an unhealthy moral atmosphere; they disturb the sight of a child's "mind's eye"; they obstruct a clear view of those good qualities which, if uncontaminated by older influence, a child would naturally desire, and desiring, acquire, without the malignant interference of those who should know better.

## CHAPTER IV

"EACH man," says R. L. Stevenson, "should learn what is within him, that he may strive to mend; he must be taught what is without him, that he may be kind to other. It can never be wrong to tell him the truth; for in his disputable state, weaving as he does his theory of life, steering himself, cheering or reproving others, all facts are of the first importance to his conduct; and even if a fact shall discourage or corrupt him, it is still best that he should know it; for it is in this world as it is, and not in a world made easy by educational suppressions, that he must win his way to shame or glory. In one word, it must always be foul to tell what is false, and it can never be safe to suppress what is true." If every parent had read these words and and acted upon them, the difficulties which crop up connected with disillusionment, and whose name is legion, would have long ago disappeared, to give no more trouble; but the average parent is inclined either to be brutally frank or cruelly secretive when dealing with the questions of children, or else the inquirers are ignored and obliged to solve mysteries for themselves. This last plan is, of the three, the kindest. It is better to let a man explore an unknown country by the aid of his own wits and strategy, than that he should

be given defective fire-arms and wrong directions by a careless guide. Better that he should perish courageously in a fashion of his own seeking than that a friend should send him to his death through the agency of a prehistoric map of the country.

And so it is with children: if proper counsel and explanation are lacking, it were advisable that they should fight their own mental and moral battles, unhampered by rusty weapons and out-of-date armour, learning to enter the field on their own legs, taking and dealing their own blows and getting whom they can to bind up their wounds. The child-mind is one huge battle-field with an intelligence department situated every few yards,—a department that cannot be starved by absence of information because it will devour itself sooner than perish, and it will have the Truth, and nothing but the Truth, if it has to sift it for years.

"It can never be safe to suppress what is true;" it can never be right to create an illusion in the child-mind by such suppression, which must eventually turn to the gall and wormwood of disillusionment; and it can only be doing grievous wrong to postpone an explanation the giving of which would calm an all too eager and inquiring spirit. Every child sooner or later asks the same question, thinks the same thought, seeks the same solution to the same old riddle. "Where did I come from?" "Where did my brother and sister come from?" "Were you once a baby, and

if so, where did *you* come from?" It is the old story of the lust for the fruit of the tree of knowledge, the budding thought, the growing interest; and to give a stone in place of bread, to nip the bud and kill the instinct, are nothing more than crimes humanly unpardonable. To tell a child a lie is bad enough, but to deceive it on this question of import, to distort its mind and distract it from a scientific and natural fact, is to court mistrust and the ceasing of any confidence ever placed in the parental hands.

There is a happy medium in all things, and obviously it would be unwise in the extreme to enter into biological, physiological, and physical details with any child: such an extremely irrational mode being as detrimental as any lie, contaminating the unprepared mind with morbid expectancy and an unhealthy fear of the unknown. On the contrary, there should be no discussion of any kind on the part of the parent, but tact and wit should flood forth in a gushing stream, swamping questions, putting ideas to rest, and sending the child back to its toys with a quiet, contented spirit and a satisfied mind.

To begin with, every child should be brought up to take one obvious fact for granted, viz., that where there is a father and mother, be it among human beings or animals, there is a family more or less large. People who would look shocked when an innocent child asks who is the father of certain puppies do more harm by their idiotic

attitude than they wot of; whereas a ready answer to such a question and an assurance that the father, though absent, is still devoted, would prohibit puzzledom in that child's brain *and it would not think on the matter any more.* With everybody and everything it should be a recognized platitude in the child-mind that there are invariably to be found a father, mother, and family, and that there is no mystery attached to the subject whatever. It is perfectly easy to be truthful, reticent, and straightforward simultaneously, securing the confidence of vacillating offspring.

An identical treatment holds good in matters delicate and indelicate. A child understands long before it is a year old that certain private functions are not mentioned in public: it knows that it is bad taste to speak of doctoring and dentistry in the drawing-room, and can fully comprehend matters when it is urged that though certain things exist, they should not be discussed. A child's modesty is as natural as its courage and truthfulness, and if properly cultivated never turns into that spurious quality called false modesty and ridiculous bashfulness. The instincts of a child are more than easily directed, and it involuntarily knows the difference between good and bad taste, vulgarity and health of mind. The mistortunes of life, the ironies of fate, the apparent injustice of existence should never be hushed up, slurred over, or eliminated from a child's perception; neither, by the same token, should such events

be exaggerated or presented from a wrong and misleading point of view. "Drama," said Maeterlinck, "can only be found in the lives of the eminently unwise," tragedy can frequently be traced to sources of human and impolitic behaviour; and may be it is only our short-sightedness which prevents our solving all those problems which many regard as a stumbling-block to faith. That there is more misery than happiness in the world is a doctrine upheld by many thinkers who would not be pessimistic if they could conquer the idea; and the fact that such a doctrine exists should become the common knowledge of every child as it grows up wishing to hear and see, to a great extent, for itself. It should be told that there is only too much misery, but that the most of it can be accounted for by vice,—and on the other hand a great deal of happiness is to be found (possibly in quiet places), for which a staunch virtue is entirely responsible. That ignorance is one lamentable cause of misery is a fact made obvious every day, and therein lies a warning to young and old, that to keep in the straight ethical path needs all the faculties of a man, that it is necessary for all his thoughts, energies and aspirations to be exercised and directed in an upright manner towards the achievement of some honourable duty, however humble and unrecognized by the rest of the world, and that it were better to strive and fail and strive again, than never to have striven at all.

Children should be told that as they grow older they will find life an up-hill job, and that the stoutest and at the same time lightest heart and conscience are the two great essentials to success. And if, in every tiniest detail of daily life, a broad-minded and honourable influence is brought to bear, those children upon reaching years of discretion will be found to be as adequately armed for the fray as lies within the power of humanity to render possible. Moreover they should be encouraged to wield that invaluable weapon, a sense of humour, a sense which when reduced to its greatest common denominator means a knowledge of the true proportion of things and their invariable valuelessness. An appreciation of the grotesque, the ridiculous, and the abnormal can only be arrived at after the acquisition of a knowledge of the beautiful, the true, and the sublime, the gorgeous and the glorious. Strength of character—the rare ability to say *no* in the right place, and *yes* in the right place with equal fearlessness—can only be arrived at through a confidence in the truth and rectitude of such a line of behaviour. To stand up for what is right and to condemn and abhor what we consider in our souls to be wrong, is to achieve something which few rightly attain, and having attained such ethical eminence, to recognize the instability of the position and to fear applause in case the roar of it should shake the position; to cling to Truth as to life itself,—this is and can be

the only victory worth winning upon this earth, a victory in which the conqueror and the vanquished are united in one frail piece of buttressed humanity, and whose highest knowledge, as the sage learned centuries ago, is the certainty that he knows *nothing*.

## CHAPTER V

"THE error made by those who discuss questions of domestic discipline," to quote Herbert Spencer, "lies in ascribing all the faults and difficulties to children, and none to their parents. The current assumption respecting family government is, that the virtues are with the rulers and the vices with the ruled;" and although it is of course possible to err in each direction, there still remains the fact that if the morals of the parents were perfect, the morals of the children would, at any rate, not be so bad as they are at the present time. Example is as strong an incentive to the search for better things as any influence; nay, in itself, it is a great influence either for good or for evil, and when parents ruthlessly endeavour to crush the faults and vices of their offspring, being at the same time oblivious to their own shortcomings, they are setting out upon a wild-goose chase and trying to achieve the impossible. Further, without a knowledge of the child-mind, however elementary, very little progress can be made. "To suppose that you can properly regulate the process of forming and accumulating ideas without understanding the nature of the process, is absurd." A good example is, therefore, of primary importance to serve as an everlasting proof of what may be

accomplished, and as a perpetual power at the back of a parent demanding similar behaviour from a child. Besides which, the triumph of a parent over temptations to walk a lower plane immediately brings in its train that perfect understanding of difficulties in connection with which the child may require help. Yet the benefit of a good example does not end here. Through the self-training of the parent will come the knowledge which so few possess, the knowledge that personal experience should not be forced upon others, it being a law of nature that things should grow only of their own strength, and that self-experience is only of value when it realizes that it is not meant to prove an obstruction in the paths of others. Parents should, if possible, tell their children what to do, leaving them to find out for themselves what not to do. To order a door to be shut implies that it is not to be left open; and to tell a child what is noble is to imply that the opposite is base, and all this without having spoken of undesirable things and contaminated an eager little brain; for there is only room for a certain amount of knowledge in the child-mind (though the space is ever growing), and if the thought food is of the best quality, spurious concoctions can gain no admittance. The moral atmosphere, too, surrounding a child will have a vast influence and a great effect upon its life not only in early youth but throughout all its succeeding years. It is not the precepts, the advice, the commands or the warnings

which make a boy clean-minded and able to conquer temptations of which his mother invariably has no notion; it is the strength of an unseen influence for good, created by an atmosphere of many years' existence, of warm affection, infinite trust, and a deep sense of honour. More battles are won by lads who have good homes, good examples, and no advice, than by those whose training has been neglected and whose admonitions have suddenly become excessive. "Every boy and youth is," says Edward Fitz-Gerald, "in his mind and sentiment a knight, and essentially a son of chivalry. Nature is fine in him. Nothing but the circumstances of a singular and most degrading system of education can ever totally destroy the action of this general law; therefore, so long as there has been, or shall be, young men to grow up to maturity, and until all youthful life shall be dead, and its source withered up for ever, so long must there have been and must there continue to be, the spirit of noble chivalry." Not one moment which a parent spends on the exploration of his or her child's nature can ever be wasted: every second of it will come in useful, every fresh knowledge gained will be a boon to both. "Not only will you have constantly to analyze the motives of your children, but you will have to analyze your own motives,—to discriminate between those internal suggestions springing from a true parental solicitude and those which spring from your own selfishness, your love

of ease, your lust of dominion. And then, more trying still, you will have not only to detect but to curb these baser impulses. In brief, you will have to carry on your own higher education at the same time that you are educating your children. Intellectually, you must cultivate to good purpose that most complex of subjects—human nature and its laws, as exhibited in your children, in yourself, and in the world. Morally, you must keep in constant exercise your higher feelings, and restrain your lower. It is a truth yet remaining to be recognized that the last stage in the mental development of each man and woman is to be reached only through a proper discharge of the parental duties. And when this truth is recognized, it will be seen how admirable is the arrangement through which human beings are led by their strongest affections to subject themselves to a discipline that they would else elude." Thus speaks Herbert Spencer, and in a translation of Aristotle it is written that "The young are ardent in desire, and what they do is from affection; they are tractable and delicate, they earnestly desire and are easily appeased; their wishes are intense, without comprehending much, as the thirst and hunger of the weary; they are passionate and hasty, and liable to be surprised by anger; for being ambitious of honour, they cannot endure to be despised, but are indignant when they suffer injustice; they love honour, but still

more victory; for youth desires superiority, and victory is superiority, and both of these they love more than riches; for as to these, of all things, they care for them the least. They are not of corrupt manners, but are innocent, from not having beheld much wickedness; and they are credulous, from having been seldom deceived; and sanguine in hope, for, like persons who are drunk with wine, they are inflamed by nature, and from their having had but little experience of fortune. And they live by hope, for hope is of the future, but memory is of the past, and to youth the future is everything, and the past but little; they hope all things, and remember nothing: and it is easy to deceive them, for the reasons which have been given; for they are willing to hope, and are full of courage, being passionate and hasty, of which tempers it is the nature of one not to fear, and of the other to inspire confidence; and thus are easily put to shame, for they have no resources to set aside the precepts which they have learned: and they have lofty souls, for they have never been disgraced or brought low; and they are unacquainted with necessity; they prefer honour to advantage, virtue to expediency; for they live by affection rather than by reason, and reason is concerned with expediency, but affection with honour: and they are warm friends and hearty companions, more than other men, because they delight in fellowship, and judge nothing by utility, and

therefore not their friends: and they chiefly err in doing things over much, for they keep no medium. They love much, and they dislike much, and so in everything, and this arises from their idea that they know everything. And their faults consist more in insolence than in actual wrong; and they are full of mercy because they regard all men as good, and more virtuous than they are; for they measure others by their own innocence; so that they suppose every man suffers wrongfully."

Finally, let the words of Carlyle complete the illustrations from great masters brought to uphold the foregoing ethological principles which, it is hoped, if unable to perform much good, may at any rate do no harm to any: "for the promise is unto you, and to your children."

"Happy season of childhood!" exclaims Teufelsdröckh, "kind nature, thou art to all a beautiful mother, that visitest the poor man's hut with auroral radiance; and for thy Nurseling hast provided a soft swathing of Love and infinite Hope, wherein he waxes and slumbers, danced-round by sweetest dreams! If the paternal Cottage still shuts us in, its roof still screens us; with a Father we have as yet a prophet, priest and king, and an obedience that makes us free. The young spirit has awakened out of Eternity, and knows not what we mean by time; as yet Time is no fast-hurrying stream, but a sportful sunlit ocean; years to the child are ages: ah! the secret

of Vicissitude, of that slower or quicker decay and ceaseless down-rushing of the universal World-fabric, from the granite mountain to the man or day-moth, is yet unknown; and in a motionless Universe, we taste, what afterwards in this quick-whirling Universe is for ever denied to us, the balm of Rest. Sleep on, thou fair Child, for thy long rough journey is at hand! A little while, and thou too shalt sleep no more, but thy very dreams shall be mimic battles; thou too, with old Arnauld, wilt have to say in stern patience, 'Rest? Rest? Shall I not have all Eternity to rest in?' Celestial Nepenthe! though a Pyrrhus conquer empires, and an Alexander sack the world, he finds thee not: and thou hast once fallen gently, of thy own accord, on the eyelids, on the heart of every mother's child. For as yet, sleep and waking are one: the fair Life-Garden rustles infinite around, and everywhere is dewy fragrance, and the budding of Hope; which budding if in youth, too frostnipt, it grow to flowers will in manhood yield no fruit, but a prickly, bitter-rinded stone-fruit, of which the fewest can find the kernel."

THE END

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